WRITERS OF THE DAY

RUDYARD KIPLING

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JOHN PALMER

WRITERS OF THE DAY

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RUDYARD KIPLING

By JOHN PALMER

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THE COMEDY OF MANNERS

THE FUTURE OF THE THEATRE

Etc., Etc.

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RUDYARD KIPLING

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By

JOHN PALMER

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I

INTRODUCTION

THERE is a tale of Mr Kipling which relates how Eustace Cleever, a celebrated novelist, came to the rooms of a young subaltern and his companions who were giving an account of themselves. Eustace Cleever was a literary man, and was greatly impressed when he learned that one of the company, who was under twenty-five and was called the Infant, had killed people somewhere in Burma. He was suddenly caught by an immense enthusiasm for the active life—the sort of enthusiasm which sedentary authors feel. Eustace Cleever ended the night riotously with youngsters who had helped to govern and extend the Empire; and he returned from their company incoherently uttering a deep contempt for art and letters.

But Eustace Cleever was being observed by the First Person Singular of Mr Kipling's tale. This receiver of confidences perceived what was happening, and he has the last word of the story:

"Whereby I understood that Eustace Cleever, decorator and colourman in words, was blaspheming his own Art and would be sorry for this in the morning."

We have here an important clue to Mr Kipling and his work. Mr Kipling writes of the heroic life. He writes of men who do visible and measurable things. His theme has usually to do with the world's work. He writes of the locomotive and the engineer; of the mill-wheel and the miller; of the bolts, bars and planks of a ship and the men who sail it. He writes, in short, of any creature which has work to do and does it well. Nevertheless we must not be misled into thinking that because Mr Kipling glorifies all that is concrete, practical, visible and active he is therefore any the less purely and

utterly a literary man. Mr Kipling seems sometimes to write as an engineer, sometimes as a soldier. At times we would wager that he had spent all his life as a Captain of Marines, or as a Keeper of Woods and Forests, or as a Horse-Dealer. He gives his readers the impression that he has lived a hundred lives, mastered many crafts, and led the life, not of one, but of a dozen, active and practical men of affairs. He has created about himself so complete an illusion of adventure and enterprise that it seems almost the least important thing about him that he should also be a writer of books. His readers, indeed, are apt to forget the most important fact as to Mr Kipling—the fact that he is a man of letters. He seems to belong rather to the company of young subalterns than to the company of Eustace Cleever.

Hence it is necessary to consider closely the moral of that excellent tale. When Eustace Cleever blasphemed against his art, Mr Kipling predicted he would be sorry for

it. Mr Kipling recorded that prediction because he had the best of reasons to know how Eustace Cleever would feel. The work of the artist may be interrupted by the call of duty. That has happened to many Eustace Cleevers since Mr Kipling introduced us to his own. But the artist, though he is rightly required to rank himself as a man in the service of his country, remains what nature made him. The purpose and work of his existence is to live the life of imagination and to handle English words. He is not, nor never can be, the Infant, and, when his duty is done, he will return, with Mr Kipling's Eustace, to the thing he was born to do. The active life will be put aside, or rather it will be regarded as something out of which his art is to be compacted. The deeds he admires in other men, including perhaps his own, will become for him no more than raw stuff, to be accepted or rejected according to the author's need.

Mr Kipling, in short, is a man of letters

and we shall realise, before we have done with him, that he is an extremely crafty and careful man of letters. Tales which seem to come out of the barrack-yard, out of the jungle or the deep sea, out of the dust and noise where men are working and building and fighting, come really out of the study of an expert craftsman using the tools of his craft with deliberate care. This may seem an unnecessary warning. The intelligent reader will protest that, since Mr Kipling writes books, it does not seem very necessary to deduce that he is a man of letters. It is true that no such warning would be necessary in the case of most writers of books. It would be pure loss of time, for example, to begin a study of the work of Mr Henry James by asserting that Mr Henry James was a man of letters. But Mr Kipling is in rather a different case. The majority of readers with whom one discusses Mr Kipling's works are sometimes far astray, simply because they have not realised that Mr Kipling is as utterly a man of letters

as Mr Henry James, that he lives as completely the life of fancy and meditation as William Blake or Francis Thompson. Mr Kipling does not write tales out of the mere fullness of his life in many continents and his talk with all kinds of men. He is not to be understood as a man singular only in his experience, unloading anecdotes from a crowded life, excelling in emphasis and reality by virtue of things actually seen and done. On the contrary, Mr Kipling writes tales because he is a writer.

Mr Kipling has seen more of the scattered life of the world and been more keenly interested in the work of the world than some of his literary contemporaries. But this does not imply that he is any the less devoted to the craft of letters. Indeed, we shall realise that he is one of the craftiest authors who ever lived. He is more crafty than Stevenson. He often lives by the word alone—the word picked and polished. That he has successfully disguised this fact from many of his admirers is only a further proof

of his literary cunning. Mr Kipling often uses words with great skill to create in his readers the impression that words matter to him hardly at all. He will work as hard as the careful sonneteer to give to his manner a tang of rawness and crudity; and thereby his readers are willing to forget that he is a literary man. They are content simply to listen to a man who has seen, and possibly done, wonders in all parts of the world, neglecting to observe that, if the world with its day's work belongs to Mr Kipling, it belongs to him only by author's right—that is, by right of imagination and right of style.

It is true that Mr Kipling is lawless and contemptuous of literary formality; and that whenever he talks of "Art," as in certain pages of *The Light That Failed*, he tries to talk as though there were really no such thing. But Mr Kipling's cheerful contempt of all that is pedantic and magisterial in "Art" does not imply that he is innocent of literary discipline. It is true that Mr

Kipling is lawless in the sense that all good work is more than a conscious adherence to formula. It is not true in the sense that Mr Kipling is more lawless than Tennyson or Walter Scott. Readers of Mr Kipling's stories must not be misled by his buccaneering contempt for formal art. Mr Kipling's art is as formal as the art of Wilde, or the art of Baudelaire, which he helped to send out of fashion.

A few preliminary words are necessary (1) as to the half-dozen dates which bear upon Mr Kipling's authorship and (2) as to the arrangement of his works here to be followed.

Mr Kipling was born in 1865, the son of J. Lockwood Kipling, C.I.E. His intimacy with India was determined at birth. He was educated at the United Services College, Westward Ho, but was again in India in 1882, as assistant editor on *The Civil and Military Gazette* and *The Pioneer*. He remained on the staff of *The Pioneer* for seven years, and travelled over the five continents.

By this time he had learned to think of the world as a place rather more diversified than a walk from Charing Cross to Whitehall would lead one to imagine; to see something of men upon its frontiers, and to love England as men do who come back to her from the ends of the earth. The whole of Mr Kipling's literary biography is contained in the fact that Mr Kipling has been a great traveller who is now inveterately at home.

Perhaps we should also note that Mr Kipling was a literary prodigy. *Plain Tales from the Hills* appeared in 1887. Mr Kipling at twenty-two had shown his quality and had already mapped out in little his career. In *Plain Tales from the Hills* there are hints for almost everything that their author afterwards accomplished. As the book of a young journalist whose name had not yet been whispered among the publishers and critics of London it was a miracle. If Mr Kipling had been able to improve on *Plain Tales from the Hills* as much as Shakespeare improved on *Love's Labour's Lost*, as much

as Shelley improved on *Queen Mab*, Robert Browning on *Pauline*, Byron on *Hours of Idleness*, he would to-day be without a peer. Mr Granville Barker is often cited as a classical modern example of precocity, but he was twenty-four when he wrote *The Marrying of Anne Leete*. Mr Henry James was twenty-eight before he had published a characteristic word. Mr Thomas Hardy at twenty-five had only printed a short story, and he was more than thirty when his first novel appeared. Mr Kipling came upon the public in 1886 without a preliminary stutter. Mr Kipling at twenty-two could write as craftily as Mr Kipling can write after nearly thirty years' experience. We shall not be greatly concerned in these pages to trace the progress of Mr Kipling's craft and wisdom. He was always crafty and always wise. He had done some of his best work at thirty. He recalls Hazlitt's curious saying that an improving author is never a great author. Mr Kipling is not an improving author. There has been a little moving

up and down the scale of excellence; many things hinted in the early volumes from *Plain Tales from the Hills* to *Many Inventions* are developed more elaborately and surely in later volumes; the old craft has come to be used with an ease that has in it more of the insolence of a master than was possible in the author of 1887. But so far as literary finish is concerned, *Plain Tales from the Hills* leaves little to be acquired. Already Mr Kipling wields his implement as deftly and firmly as many a skilled writer who was learning his lesson before Mr Kipling was born. Few authors have so surely scored their best in their earliest years. Authors are considered young to-day at thirty. Mr Kipling at that age had already written *The Jungle Book*.

This does not, of course, imply that all Mr Kipling's stories are of equal merit. On the contrary, we shall henceforth be mainly concerned with looking for the inspired author under a mass of skilful journalism. It is not a simple enterprise. Mr Kipling is

so competent an author that he is usually able to persuade his readers that his heart is equally in all he writes. Moreover, Mr Kipling has fallen among many prejudices, literary and political, which have caused his least important work to be most discussed. For these reasons the actual, as distinguished from the legendary, Mr Kipling is not easily discovered. Mainly it is a work of excavation.

Mr Kipling has been writing short stories for nearly thirty years. His tales are too numerous for disparate discussion. It will be necessary to take them in groups. One or two stories in each group will be taken as typical of the rest. Thereby we shall avoid repetition and be able to show some sort of plan to the maze of Mr Kipling's diversity of subjects and manners.

II

SIMLA

MR KIPLING'S Indian stories fall into three groups. There are (1) the tales of Simla, (2) the Anglo-Indian tales, and (3) the tales of native India. There is also *Kim*, which is more—much more—than a tale of India.

Mr Kipling's Indian stories necessarily tend to fill a disproportionate amount of space. They are of less account than their number or the attention they have received would seem to imply. Their discussion in this and the two following chapters will be more of a political than a literary discussion. Mr Kipling as journalist and very efficient colourman in words has made much of India in his time. He has perceived in India a subject susceptible of being profitably worked upon. Here was a vast

continent, the particular concern of the English, where all kinds of interesting work was being done, where stories grew too thickly for counting, and where there was, ready to the teller's eye, a richness and diversity of setting which beggared the most eager penmanship. Moreover, this continent was virtually untouched in the popular literature of the day. Naturally Mr Kipling made full use of his opportunity. He did not write of India because India was essential to his genius, but because he was shrewd enough to realise that nothing could better serve the purpose of a young author than to exploit his first-hand acquisition of an inexhaustible store of fresh and excellent material. India was annexed by Mr Kipling at twenty-two for his own literary purposes. He was not born to interpret India, nor does he throw his literary heart and soul into the business. When, in the Indian stories, we meet with pages sincerely inspired we discover that their inspiration has very little to do with India

and a great deal to do with Mr Kipling's impulse to celebrate the work of the world, and even more to do with his impulse to escape the intellectual casuistry of his generation in a region where life is simple and intense. These aspects of his work will be more clearly revealed at a later stage. For the moment we are considering the Indian tales simply as tales of India; and from this point of view they obviously belong to the journalist rather than to the author who has helped to make the English short story respectable. Mr Kipling simply gets out of India the maximum of literary effect as a teller of tales. India, for example, is mysterious. Mr Kipling exploits her mystery competently and coolly, making his points with the precision, clarity and force of one to whom the enterprise begins and ends as an affair of technical adequacy. The point is made with equal ability that India is not without peril and difficulty ruled and administered by the sahibs; or that India has a complicated history; or that India is

thickly peopled. Mr Kipling in his Indian tales makes the most of his talent for observing things, always with a keen eye for their effective literary employment. His Indian tales are descriptive journalism of a high quality; and, being journalism, their matter and their doctrine have hit hard the attention of their particular day.

This reduces us to the necessity of considering not so much their form and quality as the ideas and doctrines they contain—a barren task but necessary in order to clear away many misconceptions with regard to Mr Kipling's work. Regarded as literature, Mr Kipling's Indian tales are mainly of note as preparing in him that enthusiasm for the work of the world which, later, was to inspire his greatest pages; as finally leading him in *Kim* to a door whereby he was able to pass into the region of pure fancy where alone he is supremely happy, and as prompting in him the instinct to simplify which urged him into the jungle and into the minds of children. But all this has very little to

do with India. So long as we are dealing with Mr Kipling's Indian stories as in themselves finished and intrinsic studies of India, we remain only in the suburbs of Mr Kipling's merit as an author. The Simla tales are not more than a skilful employment of a literary convention which Mr Kipling did not inherit. The Anglo-Indian and native tales are the not less skilful work of a young newspaper man breaking into a storehouse of new material. We are interested firstly in Mr Kipling's craft as a technician, as one who makes the most of his theme deliberately and self-consciously; and secondly in Mr Kipling's point of view, in the impressions and ideas he has collected concerning the country of which he writes. Until we arrive at *The Day's Work* we shall be mainly occupied in clearing the ground of impertinent prejudices concerning Mr Kipling's temperament and politics. For though the Indian and soldier tales are as literature not impregnable to criticism, they can at any rate be rescued from those who have annexed

or repudiated them from motives which have little to do with their literary value.

We will begin with the Simla tales.

Characteristically the author who began virtually at the end of his career—proclaiming himself a finished virtuoso at the start—entered into prose with a volume of tales, radiating from Simla, which betray qualities that are usually associated with the later rather than with the early work of an author. *Plain Tales from the Hills* number more Simla stories to the square page than any other volume of Mr Kipling. Now Mr Kipling's Simla stories are the least important, but in some ways the most significant of all the stories he wrote. They begin and they end in sheer literary virtuosity. We feel in reading Mr Kipling's studies of the social world at Simla that he had no intuitive call to write them; that they are exercises in craft rather than genuine inspirations. Mrs Hawksbee stands for nothing in Mr Kipling's achievement save only for his power to create an illusion of

reality and enthusiasm by sheer finish of style. She is not a creation. She is only the best possible example of the clever sleight-of-hand of an accomplished artificer. She is in literary fiction cousin to the witty, flirtatious ladies of the modern English theatre. Her conversation is delightful, but it belongs to nobody. It does not even belong to her author. Mrs Hawksbee talks as all well-dressed women talk in the best books. She does it with a volubility and resourcefulness which almost disguises the fact that she lives only by hanging desperately to the end of her author's pen; but she cannot deceive us always. Mr Kipling does not really believe in Mrs Hawksbee. He has no real sympathy or knowledge of the social undercrust where the tangle of three is a constant theme. The talk of Mrs Hawksbee and her circle is derived. Its conduct is fashionable light comedy in an Indian setting.

Simla really does not deserve to be known outside the Indian Empire. It is a com-

paratively cool place whither Indian soldiers and civilians send their wives in the hot weather and whither they retire themselves under medical advice. It is not unlike any other warm and idle city of rest where there is every kind of expensive amusement provided for a migratory population. Mr Kipling has failed to make Simla interesting, because Simla is Biarritz and Monte Carlo or any place which in fiction is frequented by people who behave naughtily and enjoy themselves, and in real life is frequented by the upper middle classes mechanically passing the time. Mr Kipling's ingenious pretences regarding Simla are amusing, but they cannot long conceal from his readers that these tales, apart from literary exhibition, were really not worth the telling. Mr Kipling pretends, of course, even at twenty-four, to know of all that passes between women unlacing after a ball; but Mr Kipling's pretended omniscience is part of his literary method, and he does not quite carry it off in the Simla tales. He gives us not Simla

or any place under the sun, but a sparkling stage version of Simla—all dancing and delight, a little intrigue, a touch of sentiment, patches of excellent fun, and now and then a streak of Indian mystery. But Mr Kipling's heart is not really in this business. His Simla tales will not endure, and they have been given too much prominence in the popular idea of his work. They are not plain tales, but tales very artfully coloured. They fall far short of the standard to which Mr Kipling has raised the English short story. Yet even here we may note the skill with which the author has concealed his failure. Mrs Hawksbee may be taken as a symbol of the distinction between the work of an inspired author and the work of an author playing with his tools. Mr Kipling of *The Jungle Books* and *The Day's Work* is an inspired author. Mr Kipling of the Simla tales, on the other hand, is simply concerned to show that he can work a conventional formula of the day as well as any man; that he can redeem the formula with

individual touches beyond the reach of most; and can enliven it with impudent pretences which please by virtue of their being utterly preposterous. Take, for example, the pretence that Mrs Hawksbee is a charming woman. Mrs Hawksbee is really nothing of the kind. She is an anthology of witty phrases. She is the abstract perfection of what a clever head and a good heart is expected to be in a fashionable comedy. But Mr Kipling desires her to be accepted as a charming woman. His procedure, on a high and delicate plane, is precisely the procedure to which we are accustomed on a low and obvious plane in the majority of popular novels where the hero has to be accepted for a man of brilliant genius. We have to take the author's word for it. The author who tells us that his hero is a genius usually requires us to believe it without further proof. He does not show us a page of the hero's music or the hero's poetry, but we must believe that it is very fine, even though the hero loves Pietro Mascagni

and worships Martin Tupper. Similarly Mr Kipling, presenting us with Mrs Hawksbee, nowhere affords us direct evidence that she is a charming woman. He assumes it, gets everyone else in the story to assume it, and expects his readers to assume it—his cunning as a writer being of so remarkable a quality that there are very few of the Simla tales in which the reader is not prepared to assume it for the sake of the story.

Mrs Hawksbee is typical of the majority of Mr Kipling's studies in social comedy. His success in this kind is remarkable, but it is barren. Mr Kipling realised this himself quite early, for he quite soon abandoned Simla. There are some sixteen stories in *Plain Tales from the Hills* into which the Simla motive is threaded. In the books immediately following, published in 1888 and 1889, Simla is not wholly abandoned, but the proportion of Simla stories is less. *The Phantom Rickshaw* (1889) is the last story which can fairly be brought within

the list, and this story can only be included by straining its point to vanishing. Of all the groups of stories in *Plain Tales from the Hills* the Simla group, though it was largest, promised least for the future.

III

THE SAHIB

THERE is another group of Indian tales, a group which deals with the governance of India—with the men who are spent in the Imperial Service. The peculiar charm and merit of these tales is best considered as a special case of Mr Kipling's delight in the world's work—a subject which claims a chapter to itself. But apart from this, Mr Kipling's Anglo-Indian tales—his presentation of the work of the Indian Empire, of the Anglo-Indian soldier and civilian—have an unfortunate interest of their own. They are mainly responsible for a misconception which has dogged Mr Kipling through all his career. This misconception consists in regarding Mr Kipling as primarily an Imperialist pamphleteer with a brief for the Services

and a contempt for the Progressive Parties. It is an error which has acted mischievously upon all who share it—upon the reader who mechanically regrets that Mr Kipling's work should be disfigured with fierce heresy; upon the reader who chuckles with sectarian glee when the "much talkers" are mocked and confounded; upon Mr Kipling himself who has been encouraged to mistake an accident of his career as the essence of his achievement and to regard himself as a sort of Imperial laureate. The origin of this misconception is not obscure. Mr Kipling has written intimate tales of the British Army: he is, therefore, a "militarist." He has lived in India many years, and realised that men who live in India, and administer India, and come into personal contact with Hindus and Mohammedans, know more about India than Members of Parliament who run through the Indian continent between sessions: he is, therefore, a reviler of the free democratic institutions of Great Britain. He has realised that

Government departments in Whitehall are not always thought to be very expeditious, well informed and devoted by men who are often confronted with matters that cannot afford to wait for a telegram: he is, therefore, a lover of the high hand and of courses brutal and irregular. He has celebrated the toil and the adventure of pioneers and of outposts: he is, therefore, one who brandishes unseasonably the Imperial sword.

The grain of truth in these deductions is heavily outweighed by the massive absurdity of regarding them as in any sense essential. Mr Kipling brings political prejudice into his work less than almost any living contemporary. At a time when there was hardly an English novel or an English play of consequence which was not also a political pamphlet it was completely false to regard Mr Kipling as a pamphleteer. When most of our English authors were talking from the platform, Mr Kipling—with a few, too few, others—remained apart. He is suspect, not because his Anglo-Indian tales or his army

tales are political, but because they record much that is true of the English Services, which fails to square with much that once was popularly believed about them. The real reason of Mr Kipling's false fame as a politician is, not that he is an Imperial pamphleteer, but that, writing of the Army and the Empire, he fails to be a pamphleteer on the other side. His detachment, not his partiality, is at fault.

Mr Kipling's detachment from the politics of his day explains virtually everything that has offended his modern critics. Almost the first thing to realise in discussing Mr Kipling's attitude to modern life is that Mr Kipling has kept absolutely clear of the political and social drift of the last thirty years. He has been conspicuously out of everything. He has had nothing to say to any of the ideas or influences which have formed his contemporaries. While others of his literary generation were growing up amid intellectual movements, democratic tendencies and advances of humanity, Mr

Kipling was standing between two civilisations in India which were hardly susceptible of being reconciled till they had been reduced to very simple terms. The instinct to simplify—to get down to something in nature that included the East with the West, the First with the Twentieth century, was naturally strong in one who was born between two nations; and it was an instinct which drove Mr Kipling in the opposite direction from that in which his contemporaries were moving. While Mr Kipling's generation was learning to analyse, refine and interrogate, to become super-subtle and incredulous, to exalt the particular and ignore the general, to probe into the intricate and sensitive places of modern life, Mr Kipling was looking at mankind in the mass, looking back to the half-dozen realities which are the stuff of the poetry of every climate and period—to love of country which is as old as the waters of Babylon, to the faith of Achates, and the affliction of Job. While Mr Kipling's contemporaries have been

working towards minute studies of individuals and groups, Mr Kipling has been content to catch the metal of humanity at the flash point, to wait for the passionate moment which reveals all mankind as of one kindred. "We be of one blood, ye and I"—the phrase of the Jungle holds.

To find here evidence of a bias merely political, of an attitude reactionary and hostile to the progress o the world, is to deny sense and meaning to the greatest literature of the world. Mr Kipling's instinctive simplifying of life he shares with the immortals. It is, as we shall see, the immortal part of him. To write of Mr Kipling as though he celebrates the ape and the tiger; extols the Philistine and the brute; calls always for more chops—"bloody ones with gristle"; delights in the savagery of war, and ferociously despises all that separates the Englishman of to-day from his painted ancestor—this is the mistake of critics who cannot distinguish the cant of progress from its reality.

We shall be driven more particularly to consider Mr Kipling's atavism in discussing his tales of the British Army. For the present we are dealing only with India and the "Imperialism" which some of Mr Kipling's critics have taken for an offensive proof of his political prejudice. Mr Kipling's treatment of the Anglo-Indian, and of the dealing of the Anglo-Indian with the Indian Empire, has nothing to do with the Yellows and the Blues. The real motive of Mr Kipling's attitude towards the men on the frontier, in places where deadly things are encountered and there is work to be done, is no more a matter of politics, "progressive" or "reactionary," than is his celebration of the Maltese Cat or of ·007. "The White Man's Burden" is the burden of every creature in whom there lives the pride of unrewarded labour, of endurance and courage. In India this pride has to be wholesomely tempered with humility; for India is old and vast and incomprehensible, to be handled with care, to be approached

as a country which, though it shows an inscrutably smiling face to the modern world, has the power suddenly to baffle its modern rulers by opening to them glimpses of an intricate and unassailable life which cannot be ruffled by Orders in Council or disturbed by the weak ploughing of teachers from the West. The task of the Anglo-Indian administrator is, indeed, the finest opportunity for that heroic life to the celebration of which Mr Kipling has devoted so many of his tales. This hero has a task which taxes all his ability, which promises little riches and little fame, and is known to be tolerably hopeless. It offers to him a supreme test of his virtue—a test in which the hero is accountable only to his personal will; whose best work is its own reward and comfort.

"Gentlemen come from England," writes Mr Kipling in one of his Indian tales, "spend a few weeks in India, walk round this great sphinx of the Plains, and write books upon its ways and its work, denouncing or praising it as their ignorance prompts. Consequently

all the world knows how the Supreme Government conducts itself. But no one, not even the Supreme Government, knows everything about the administration of the Empire. Year by year England sends out fresh drafts for the first fighting-line, which is officially called the Indian Civil Service. These die, or kill themselves by overwork, or are worried to death, or broken in health and hope, in order that the land may be protected from death and sickness, famine and war, and may eventually become capable of standing alone. It will never stand alone; but the idea is a pretty one, and men are willing to die for it, and yearly the work of pushing and coaxing and scolding and petting the country into good living goes forward. If an advance be made, all credit is given to the native, while the Englishmen stand back and wipe their foreheads. If a failure occurs, the Englishmen step forward and accept the blame."

This passage declares the heroic spirit of Mr Kipling's Anglo-Indian tales; and many readers will fail to understand how exactly this spirit has been found vainglorious.

There is a passage in Shakespeare where a king's envoy comes to claim of a high-mettled and sweating warrior the fruits of victory. The warrior grudges less surrendering the fruits of victory to the king than he grudges surrendering his anger at being easily and prettily addressed on the field of battle by a polite and dainty fellow who has no idea how dearly the fruits of victory are purchased. Mr Kipling's heroes are frail enough to feel some of this very natural indignation when unbreathed politicians lecture them in the heat of their Indian day. They come into touch with things simple and bitter. India has searched out the value of many a Western shibboleth, destroyed many doctrines, principles, ideas and theories. Phrases which look well in a peroration look foolish when there is immediate work to be done, and expediency begins to rule. The first lesson which the Indian civilian learns, a lesson which is rarely omitted from any of Mr Kipling's Indian stories, is that practical men are

better for being ready to take the world as they find it. The men who worship the Great God Dungara, the God of Things as They Are, most terrible, One-eyed, Bearing the Red Elephant Tusk—men who are set on saving their own particular business—have no time for saving faces and phrases. They have small respect for a principle. They have seen too many principles break down under the particular instance. Hence there is in all Mr Kipling's work a disrespect of things which are printed and made much of in the contemporary British press; and this, again, has encouraged the idea that he is "reactionary," contemptuous of the humanities, and enemy of all the best poets and philosophers.

It will perhaps be well to look a little closely at one or two of Mr Kipling's Indian stories. They will help us to realise how the charges we are discussing have arisen and exactly how unreasonable they are. The first of two excellent examples is the story of *Tods' Amendment*. *Tods' Amendment* is the

story of a Bill brought in by the Supreme Legislative Council of India. Tods was an English baby of six, and he mixed on friendly terms with Indians in the bazaar and with members of the Supreme Legislative Council. The Council was at this time devising a new scheme of land tenure which aimed at "safeguarding the interests" of a few hundred thousand cultivators of the Punjab. The Bill was beautiful on paper; and the Legal Member, who knew Tods, was settling the "minor details." The weak part of the business was that European legislators, dealing with natives, are often puzzled to know which details are the major and which the minor. Also the Native Member was from Calcutta, and knew nothing about the Punjab. Nevertheless, the Bill was known to be a beautiful Bill till Tods happened one evening to be sitting on the knee of the Legal Member, and to hear him mention *The Submontane Tracts Ryotwari Revised Enactment.* Tods had heard the bazaar talking of a new plan for the Ryotwari, as

bazaars talk when there is no white man to overhear. Tods began to prattle, and the Legal Member began to listen, till he soon realised that there was only one drawback to the beautiful Bill. The beautiful Bill, in short, was altogether wrong, more especially in the Council's pet clause which so clearly "safeguarded the interests of the tenant." It therefore came about that the rough draft of the Submontane Tracts Ryotwari Revised Enactment was put away in the Legal Member's private paper-box—"and, opposite the twenty-second clause, pencilled in blue chalk, and signed by the Legal Member, are the words, 'Tods' Amendment.'"

The moral of the tale is not obscure. A baby who runs in the bazaar is better able to legislate for India than a Supreme Legislative Council. India, in short, is a vast and uncertain land, whose ways are not always learned in a lifetime by the men whose business it is. The argument *a fortiori*—namely, that amiable and humane political

philosophers, well bred in the latest European theories of government, are even less likely to be infallible—need not be pursued.

Our second story is the story of Aurelian McGoggin. Aurelian McGoggin had read too many books, and he had too many theories. He also had a creed: "It was not much of a creed. It only proved that men had no souls, and there was no God and no hereafter, and that you must worry along somehow for the good of humanity." McGoggin had found it an excellent creed for a Government office, and he brought it to India and tried to teach it to all his friends. His friends had found that life in India is not long enough to waste in proving that there is no one particular at the head of affairs, and they objected. They also warned McGoggin not to be too good for his work, and not to insist on doing it better than it needed to be done, because people in India wanted all their energy for bare life. But McGoggin would not be warned, and one day, when he had steadily overworked and over-

talked through the hot season, he was suddenly interrupted at the club, in the middle of an oration. The doctor called it *aphasia*; but McGoggin only knew that he was struck sensationally dumb: "Something had wiped his lips of speech as a mother wipes the milky lips of her child, and he was afraid. For a moment he had lost his mind and memory—which was preposterous and something for which his philosophy did not allow. Henceforth he did not appear to know so much as he used to about things Divine."

McGoggin, in fact, was converted; for, as Mr Kipling explains, his story is really a tract—a tract whose purpose is to convey that India is able to cure the most resolute positivist of his positivism. Mr Kipling's India is a land where science is mocked, and synthetic philosophies perish, and mere talk is wiped from the lips. You do not talk of Humanity in India, because in India "you really see humanity—raw, brown, naked humanity—with nothing between it

and the blazing sky, and only the used-up, overhandled earth underfoot." Mr Kipling's Indian administrators are practical and simple men, who obey orders and accept the incredible because their position requires them to administer India as though they were never at fault, whereas their experience tells them that, if they are never to be at fault in India, it is wise to be not too original and fatal to be too rigid.

Tods' Amendment and *The Conversion of Aurelian McGoggin* are printed among *Plain Tales from the Hills*. They look forward to a whole series of Anglo-Indian tales which present Mr Kipling's idea of the English in India. Out of his later books we can illustrate a hundred times his conviction that in India the simplest wisdom is the best.

But there are two kinds of simplicity. The one kind is illustrated in a tale from *The Day's Work*; it is the right kind of simplicity. In no story of Mr Kipling is the devoted service and practical resourcefulness of the good Civilian so movingly

celebrated as in the story of *William the Conqueror*. It is the story of a famine, and of how it was met by the servants of the Indian Government. The administration of famine relief would seem to be a simple thing when the grain has come by rail and only waits to be distributed. But the district served by the little group of English in *William the Conqueror* was a district which did not understand the food of the North, and, if it could not get the rice which it knew, was ready to starve within reach of bagsful of unfamiliar wheat or rye. The hero of the tale is finally reduced to distributing the Government rations to the goats, and keeping the starving babies alive with milk. It was a simple idea, and the man to whom it occurred worked himself to death's door, which was no more than another simple idea of what was due from him to the district and to his superior officer.

The wrong kind of simplicity is illustrated in a story from *Life's Handicap*. It is called *The Head of the District*, and it has to do

with a simple idea which occurred to the Viceroy. A Deputy Commissioner who understood the lawless Khusru Kheyel and had put into them the fear of English law had died and a successor had to be appointed. The man for the post was a certain Tallentire who had worked with the late head of the district and knew the tribe with whom he had to deal. But the Viceroy had a Principle. He wished to educate the natives in self-government; and here was an opportunity—a vacant post of responsibility and a native candidate to fill it.

"There was a gentleman and a member of the Bengal Civil Service who had won his place and a university degree to boot in fair and open competition with the sons of the English. He was cultured, of the world, and, if report spoke truly, had wisely and, above all, sympathetically ruled a crowded district in South-Eastern Bengal. He had been to England and charmed many drawing-rooms there. His name, if the Viceroy recollected aright, was Mr Grish Chunder Dé, M.A. In short, did anybody see any objection to the

appointment, always on principle, of a man of the people to rule the people? The district in South-Eastern Bengal might with advantage, he apprehended, pass over to a younger civilian of Mr G. C. Dé's nationality (who had written a remarkably clever pamphlet on the political value of sympathy in administration); and Mr G. C. Dé could be transferred northward. As regarded the mere question of race, Mr Grish Chunder Dé was more English than the English, and yet possessed of that peculiar sympathy and insight which the best among the best Service in the world could only win to at the end of their service."

The principle was sound; but the consequences were such as usually follow when ideas which are simple in one continent are applied in another. Any man on the frontier could have told what would come of asking the Khusru Kheyel to respect and obey Mr Grish Chunder Dé. It was not a matter of religion or ability, but of history. The Khusru Kheyel had had relations with the countrymen of their new Head for genera-

tions and they were not relations of respect and obedience. How there was riot and some rapid blood-letting on the border, and how the new Head resigned his office before he had taken it over, is told as a warning that there is a wrong kind of simplicity in dealing with India. It is fatal to have invented simple and embracing phrases about a country which holds more races than all Europe; has had a long and private history of its own; has been more often conquered than Great Britain; and has had every sort of experience except that of being governed according to constitutional law.

This chapter being mainly devoted to rescuing Mr Kipling from his political admirers and censors, it may be well to conclude upon his vision of the devoted civilian Scott, the hero of a tale already quoted, the man who fed the Indian babies from a herd of goats fattened on the food which the starving people of the Deccan distrusted and refused. Scott appears in that story at sunset, delectable and humane, sneezing in

the dust of a hundred little feet, " a god in a halo of gold dust, walking slowly at the head of his flocks, while at his knee ran small naked cupids."

Clearly there is something wrong with the popular habit of regarding Mr Kipling as essentially concerned with the carving of men to the " nasty noise of beef-cutting on the block." His " god in a halo of gold dust " seriously discourages any attempt to brand him with the mark of the reverting carnivor.

IV

NATIVE INDIA

FROM Simla we have come down to the plains and the work of the English in Imperial India. Thence we pass to India herself. Concerning native India Mr Kipling's principle thesis — a thesis illustrated with point and competency in many excellent tales — is that for the people of the West there can be no such thing as the real India—only here and there an understanding that wavers and frequently expires. Mr Kipling does not insolently explain that India is thus and thus. He allows the impression to grow upon us, as once it grew upon himself, that in India all the settled ways of the West are insecure, that at any moment we may be looking into the House of Suddhu.

" A stone's throw out on either hand
From that well-ordered road we tread,
And all the world is wild and strange:
Churel and ghoul and Djinn and sprite
Shall bear us company to-night,
For we have reached the Oldest Land
Wherein the Powers of Darkness range."

It is not for an Englishman to speak of the real India. Let him stand with Mr Kipling between East and West, and allow each thing he sees to add to his dark and intricate impression. India will then assume her own uneasy and vast form, will press upon the nerves, and be declared mysterious.

There are a few pages in *Life's Handicap* describing the City of Lahore by night. There is great heat in these pages; there is distance also, and the breathless air of streets where the formic swarming of India, her callous fecundity, the tyranny of her skies, and her old faith, prepare us for the House of Suddhu and the return of Imray:

" The roof-tops are crammed with men, women, and children; and the air is full of

undistinguishable noises. They are restless in the City of Dreadful Night; and small wonder. The marvel is that they can even breathe. If you gaze intently at the multitude you can see that they are almost as uneasy as a daylight crowd; but the tumult is subdued. Everywhere, in the strong light, you can watch sleepers turning to and fro, shifting their beds and again resettling them. In the pit-like courtyards of the houses there is the same movement.

"The pitiless Moon shows it all. Shows, too, the plains outside the city, and here and there a hand's-breadth of the Ravee without the walls. Shows lastly, a splash of glittering silver on a house-top almost directly below the mosque Minar. Some poor soul has risen to throw a jar of water over his fevered body; the tinkle of the falling water strikes faintly on the ear. Two or three other men, in far-off corners of the City of Dreadful Night, follow his example, and the water flashes like heliographic signals. . . . Still the unrestful noise continues, the sigh of a great city overwhelmed with the heat, and of a people seeking in vain for rest. It is only the lower-class women who sleep on the house-tops. What

must the torment be in the latticed zenanas, where a few lamps are still twinkling? There are footfalls in the court below. It is the *Muezzin*—faithful minister; but he ought to have been here an hour ago to tell the Faithful that prayer is better than sleep—the sleep that will not come to the city.

"The *Muezzin* fumbles for a moment with the door of one of the Minars, disappears awhile, and a bull-like roar—a magnificent bass thunder—tells that he has reached the top of the Minar. They must hear the cry to the banks of the shrunken Ravee itself! Even across the courtyard it is almost overpowering. The cloud drifts by and shows him outlined black against the sky, hands laid upon his ears, and broad chest heaving with the play of his lungs—'Allah ho Akbar'; then a pause while another *Muezzin* somewhere in the direction of the Golden Temple takes up the call—'Allah ho Akbar.' Again and again; four times in all; and from the bedsteads a dozen men have risen up already.—'I bear witness that there is no God by God.'

. . . . . .

"Several weeks of darkness pass after this.

For the Moon has gone out. The very dogs are still, and I watch for the first light of the dawn before making my way homeward. Again the noise of shuffling feet. The morning call is about to begin, and my night watch is over. 'Allah ho Akbar! Allah ho Akbar!' The east grows grey, and presently saffron; the dawn wind comes up as though the *Muezzin* had summoned it; and, as one man, the City of Dreadful Night rises from its bed and turns its face towards the dawning day. . . .

"'Will the Sahib, out of his kindness, make room?' What is it? Something borne on men's shoulders comes by in the half-light, and I stand back. A woman's corpse going down to the burning-ghat, and a bystander says, 'She died at midnight from the heat.'"

This passage may stand as a fair example of Mr Kipling's method of dealing with India. It is an able piece of descriptive writing. It is marked by a conscious and deliberate resolve that the "effect" shall be made. It shows us the Indian city from a high distance,

as it appeared to an observer with a knack for vividly delivering his impressions. It is in no sense an inspired wrestle with the reality of India; and in that it is typical. Mr Kipling has never claimed to grasp or interpret his Indian theme. He has stood away almost ostentatiously from the material he was exploiting.

It is indeed the chief merit of his Indian tales that he admits himself to be no more, so far as India is concerned, than an adventurer making the literary most of his adventure. He has at any rate the sensibility to be conscious that often he is in the position of a tripper before the Sphinx. His tales are thrilled with respect and a sense of India's power. She it is who wipes the lips of Aurelian McGoggin, who flouts the Greatest of All the Viceroys, humbles the Legal Member of the Supreme Legislative Council, and drives the lonely white intruder to illusion and death. She is indifferent to every conqueror. She feeds her multitudes like a mother; and then suddenly her bounty

dries and there is famine and pestilence. Always she is a confronting Presence dwarfing to one height masters and slaves. Mr Kipling has followed this Presence as Browning's poet followed a more familiar quest:

"Yet the day wears,
And door succeeds door;
I try the fresh fortune—
Range the wide house from the wing to the centre.
Still the same chance! She goes out as I enter."

It is a lawful adventure, and for some it is an absolute duty, to follow and challenge the Presence in word and deed. Englishmen who live in her shadow have sometimes for their honour to grasp and defy her; to assume that they are bound to question her authority. India for all her unknown terror has to be wrestled with for the blessing that England requires upon the labour of the English. Though the Gods of India are

sacred, the devils of India, filthy and lawless, must be driven out. When India put the mark of the beast upon Fleete the powers of darkness had of necessity to be brought to heel, and this story may be read as a parable. The mark of the beast, wherever it may appear, is the Imperial concern of the English in India.

But a warning enters here. Mr Kipling, celebrating Imperial India, has shown us the English at close war with the India of black magic and secret murder, of cruelty and fear. But he has balanced the account. There is another set of stories, showing us how the white man comes to disaster, who, not content with his exact and simple duty, insolently overleaps the breach between East and West—the breach which Mr Kipling himself so scrupulously observes. There was Trajego:

"He knew too much in the first instance; and he saw too much in the second. He took too deep an interest in native life; but he will never do so again."

His story is entitled *Beyond the Pale*, and is to be found among *Plain Tales from the Hills*. There is also *The Man Who Would Be King*. He, too, neglected the barriers. India may be ruled by the resolute and challenged by the brave; but India may never be embraced.

India, who strikes out of a brazen sky; who poisons with her infected breath and is served to the death without reward; who physically cows her people with dust and fever and heat, and is possessed with devils who must be pacified; where successive civilisations have left their bones upon the soil and a hundred religions have decayed, leaving the old air heavy with exhalations—this India slowly takes shape in Mr Kipling's native stories. Her physical immensity and pressure is felt in stories like *The End of the Passage* and *William the Conqueror*. Her sleepless tyranny, which has made men intricate and incalculable, driving them to subterranean ways of thought and fancy, rules in every page of a tale like *The Return*

of Imray. Imray was an amiable Englishman who incautiously patted the head of his servant's child. Bahadur Khan speaks of it thus to Strickland of the Police:

"'Walking among us, his servants, he cast his eyes upon my child who was four years old. Him he bewitched, and in ten days he died of the fever, my child!'

"'What said Imray Sahib?'

"'He said he was a handsome child and patted him on the head; wherefore my child died. Wherefore I killed Imray Sahib in the twilight, when he had come, and was sleeping. Wherefore I dragged him up into the roof-beams and made all fast behind him—the Heaven-born knows all things. I am the servant of the Heaven-born. . . . Be it remembered that the Sahib's shirts are correctly enumerated, and that there is an extra piece of soap in his wash-basin. My child was bewitched and I slew the wizard.'"

There is here just that blend of simplicity and incalculable darkness found in all Mr Kipling's native tales. If the premises of

life in India are tortuous, conduct and reasoning are as naïvely innocent as a problem in geometry.

It follows that, when the devils are out of the story, no story breathes more delightfully of Eden than a story of the East. The white side of the black story of Imray Sahib is shown in *Kim*, and in all the hints and small studies for *Kim* that preceded Mr Kipling's best of all Indian tales.

But *Kim* is something of a paradox. It is the best of all Indian tales by virtue of qualities which have little to do with India. It is an Indian book only upon its least important side. It is true that Kim himself is upon one side the most cunning of Mr Kipling's studies of the meeting of East and West; but that, for us, is not his final merit. It is the final merit of Kim to be first cousin of Mowgli, the child of the Jungle. His first claim to our delight in him is that he is the quickest of young creatures, his senses sharp and clean, of a conscience untroubled, of a spirit that rejoices in nimble work, of a

will in which loyalty and courage and the peace of self-confidence are firmly rooted. In a word, he is Mowgli among men.

Here, however, we approach *Kim* merely as a tale of India—as a link artfully used by Mr Kipling to connect and pass in review the whole pageant of Imperial India as it is revealed to Western eyes—priests, peasants, soldiers, civilians, people of the plains and hills, women of the latticed palanquin and the bazaar, Hindu and Mohammedan, Afghan and Bengali. The picture of the Grand Trunk Road in *Kim* is an almost unsurpassed piece of descriptive writing. The diversity of the picture dazzles and bewilders us at first. Then out of all this diversity there gradually comes a conviction that fundamentally India is unimaginably simple at heart in spite of her medley of religions and conquests and races; that it is precisely this simplicity which baffles the intruder. There is the simplicity of Bahadur Khan, whose child was bewitched: *therefore* he killed Imray Sahib

and hid his body behind the ceiling cloth. There is the simplicity of the hunter of Daoud Shah, whose house was dishonoured: *therefore* he killed his wife and went upon the trail of her seducer. There is the simplicity of men who starve and are burnt with the sun: *therefore* they deprecate the wrath of devils and put food in the beggar's bowl. There is, above all, the simplicity of clean hunger, thirst, adventure, piety, friendliness and love that threads the whole story of the Lama and his *Chela*.

Kim is one of the few really beautiful stories in modern literature. The brain and fancy of thousands of readers to-day are richer and sweeter by that tale of the Master and his Friend of All the World. We would not leave him and his Wheel of Things, the River he sought in simple faith, the trust he had in the charity of men, the message that bade him seek release in Nirvana from the importunity of life quaintly warring with instinctive gestures of delight and sympathy with all that made life precious—we would

not leave this exquisite story so soon, were it not that it brings forward the imperishable side of Mr Kipling's work to which we shall have shortly to return. *Kim* bridges the gap between the Indian stories and *The Jungle Book*, which means that *Kim* is all but the top of Mr Kipling's achievement.

V

SOLDIERS THREE

MR KIPLING'S three soldiers—Mulvaney, Ortheris and Learoyd—are a literary tradition. They are the Horatii and the Curatii, the three Musketeers; Og, Gog and Magog; Captains Fluellin, Macmorris and Jamy; Bardolph, Pistol and Nym. That Kipling's soldiers three are a literary tradition is significant of their quality and rank as part of their author's achievement. They belong rather to the efficient literary workman who wrote the Simla tales than to the inspired author of the Jungle books. Though we have run from the House of Suddhu to the barrack-yard, we have not yet lost sight of Mr Kipling, decorator and colourman in words. We shall find him conspicuously at work upon Mulvaney, Ortheris and Learoyd.

Where, at first, he seems most closely to rub sleeves with the raw stuff of life we shall find him most aloof, most deliberately an artificer. Mr Kipling has seemed to the judicious, who have duly grieved, to be in his soldier tales throwing all crafty scruples to the winds in order that he may the more joyfully indulge a natural genius for ferocity. Mr Kipling's soldiers are regarded as an instance of his love for low company, of his readiness to sacrifice æsthetic beauty to vulgar truth.

This is quite the wrong direction from which to approach Mr Kipling's soldier tales. Mr Kipling's ferocity on paper is not to be explained as the result of a natural delight in violence and blood. On the contrary, it is distinctively a literary ferocity—the ferocity, not of a man who has killed people, but of a man who sits down and conscientiously tries to imagine what it is like to kill people. It is essentially the same kind of ferocity in imaginative fiction as the ferocity of Nietzsche in lyrical philosophy or of Malthus in speculative politics. When Mr Kipling

talks of men carved in battle to the nasty noise of beef-cutting upon the block, or of men falling over like the rattle of fire-irons in the fender and the grunt of a pole-axed ox, or of a hot encounter between two combatants wherein one of them after feeling for his opponent's eyes finds it necessary to wipe his thumb on his trousers, or of gun wheels greasy from contact with a late gunner—when Mr Kipling writes like this, we admit that his pages are disagreeable. But let us be clear as to the reason. These things are disagreeable, not because they are horrible fact, but because they are deliberate fiction. We feel that these things have been written, not from inspired impulse, but by taking careful thought. Here, clearly, is a writer who writes of war, not because he is by nature full of pugnacity, or necessarily loosed from hell to speak of horrors, but because war is a good "subject" with opportunities for effective treatment.

It is incorrect to say that Mr Kipling naturally delights in savage war. He has

been accused of a positive gusto for knives and bayonets, for redly dripping steel and spattered flesh. The gusto must be confessed; but it is not a gusto for the subject. It is the skilled craftsman's gusto for doing things thoroughly and effectively. Mr Kipling cannot conceal his delight in his competency to make war as nasty as Zola or Tolstoi have made it. But this has nothing to do with a delight in war. Professors have gloried in blood and iron who would probably faint away in the nice, clean operating theatre of a London hospital. Philosophers who cannot run upstairs have preached the survival of the physically fittest. The politest of Roman poets has felicitously described how the two halves of a warrior's head fell to right and left of his vertebral column. Mr Kipling's savagery is of this excessively cultivated kind. It is not atavism or a sinister resolution to stand in the way of progress and gentility. Mr Kipling's warrior tales, in fact, allow us clearly to realise that Mr Kipling's real in-

spiration and interest is far away from the battle-field and the barrack. They are the kind of battle story which is usually written by sedentary poets who live in the country and are fond of children. Only they are the very best of their kind.

Mr Kipling's study of the professional soldier is best observed in Private Ortheris. Mulvaney is more popular, but Mulvaney in no sense belongs to Mr Kipling. He is the stage Irishman of the old Adelphi and the hero of many tales by Lever and Marryat. He is as purely a convention of the days of Mr Kipling's youth as are Mrs Hawksbee and the Simla ladies. His chief importance lies in the opportunities he gives Mr Kipling for indulging his joyful gift for pure farce. *Krishna Mulvaney* and *My Lord the Elephant* are farce of the first quality, whose merit liberally covers the charge that their hero is of no human importance. Ortheris is in rather a different case. He has just that air of being authentic which is needed for an anecdote or narrative. He is not a pro-

found and original document in human nature. There is no such document in any one of Mr Kipling's books. But he stands well erect among the professional soldiers of literature.

We will take one look at Private Ortheris at work:

"Ortheris suddenly rose to his knees, his rifle at his shoulder, and peered across the valley in the clear afternoon light. His chin cuddled the stock, and there was a twitching of the muscles of the right cheek as he sighted; Private Stanley Ortheris was engaged on his business. A speck of white crawled up the watercourse.

"'See that beggar? . . . Got 'im.'

"Seven hundred yards away, and a full two hundred down the hillside, the deserter of the Aurangabadis pitched forward, rolled down a red rock, and lay very still, with his face in a clump of blue gentians, while a big raven flapped out of the pine wood to make investigation.

"'That's a clean shot, little man,' said Mulvaney.

"Learoyd thoughtfully watched the

smoke clear away. 'Happen there was a lass tewed up wi' him, too,' said he.

"Ortheris did not reply. He was staring across the valley, with the smile of the artist who looks on the completed work."

This passage has been quoted against Mr Kipling as evidence of his inhuman delight in the hunting of man. If we look at it closely we shall find (1) an obvious delight in Ortheris as a professional expert who knows his business, the same delight which we find in Mr Hinchcliffe the engineer or in Dick Heldar the painter, and (2) the extremely self-conscious and cold-blooded effort of a competent author to write like a professional soldier, and (3) the intrusion of a born sentimentalist in Learoyd's little touch of feeling at the close.

The War Office book of infantry training contains some very curt and calm directions for getting a "good point" in bayonet exercise. The bayonet has to be correctly driven in, left in the enemy for a reasonable time, and extracted with a minimum of

effort to the practitioner and a maximum of damage to the subject. Disabling the enemy in war is a professional and technical matter, and Mr Kipling is always able to be enthusiastic when things are beginning to be technical. Whether it be sighting a deserter at seven hundred yards, painting a charge of horse, writing what Dr Johnson would describe as the " most poetical paragraph in the English language," or building a bridge over the Ganges, Mr Kipling is ready to be interested so long as the workman is competent, and the work of a highly skilled and special nature. Naturally, therefore, Mr Kipling has succeeded in getting very near to the professional view of soldiering. All Mr Kipling's soldiers take their soldiering as men of business. This was what so terribly astonished and interested Cleever when he met the Infant and heard that after he had killed a man he had felt thirsty and " wanted a smoke too " ; and Cleever has been followed in his astonishment by many of Mr Kipling's literary critics.

The greatest study in literature of the professional soldier—though he is infinitely more than that—is Shakespeare's Falstaff. It will be remembered that Falstaff, after having led his men where they were finely peppered, also suffered from thirst; and, being an old campaigner, he was not unprovided. The fate of Falstaff upon the British stage for many centuries—where he has actually been played, not as a professional soldier, but as an incompetent poltroon!—seems to indicate that no figure is more liable to be misunderstood than the man whose business or duty it is to fight between meals. Even Mr Kipling, in his anxiety to emphasise that a regular soldier, apart from any personal and heroic qualities he may happen to possess, is to be regarded as just a skilled practitioner whose work asks for courage and resource, fails to take soldiering with the magnificent nonchalance of Shakespeare's soldiers. Shakespeare takes the professional view for granted. But Mr Kipling does not quite do that.

There is a continuously implicit protest in all Mr Kipling's soldier tales that a soldier's killing is like an editor's leader-writing or a painter's sketching from the nude—a protest which by its frequent over-emphasis shows that Mr Kipling, not having Shakespeare's gift of intuition into every kind of man, has not quite succeeded in identifying himself with the soldier's point of view. It is always present in his mind as something novel and surprising, needing insistence and emphasis.

This is equally true of all Mr Kipling's essays in brutality. His ferocity is as forced as his tenderness is natural. Violence and war are clearly foreign to his unprompted imagination. Only it happens that Mr Kipling has talked with soldiers; and, like Eustace Cleever, he is prompted occasionally to spend a perversely riotous evening in their company. The literary result is far from being contemptible; but it is far from being as precious as the result of his unprompted intrusion into the country of the

Brushwood Boy, into Cold Lairs and the Council Rock.

The soldier tales rank not very far above the tales from Simla. Their interest is mainly the interest of watching a skilled writer consciously using all his skill to give an air of authenticity to things not vitally realised. Mulvaney is pure convention, and Ortheris, though he more individually belongs to Mr Kipling, is rather an effort than a success. We have not yet got at the heart of Mr Kipling's work. It yet remains to cross the barrier which divides some of the best journalism of our time from literature which will outlive its author.

VI

THE DAY'S WORK

WHEN we come to *The Day's Work* we are getting very near to Mr Kipling at his best. We should notice at this point that in all the stories we have so far surveyed the men have mattered less than the work they do. The great majority of Mr Kipling's tales are a song in praise of good work. Almost it seems as if, in the year 1897, their author had himself realised the significance of this; for it was in that year he published the volume entitled *The Day's Work*; and it was the best volume, taking it from cover to cover, that had as yet appeared.

The first and best story in *The Day's Work* at once introduces the theme which threads all the best work of Mr Kipling. *The Bridge-Builders* is the story of a Bridge

and incidentally of the men who built it. The crown has yet to be set upon a long agony of toil and disappointment. The master builder of the Bridge has put the prime of his energy and will into its building. Now it stands all but complete, with the Ganges gathering in her upper reaches for a mighty effort to throw off her strange fetters. The Bridge before the night of the flood has passed away becomes the symbol of a wrestle between the most ancient gods and the young will of man. Mr Kipling has put the Bridge into the foreground of his picture, has made of it the really sentient figure of the tale. Here definitely he writes the first chapter of his book of steam and steel; and we begin to be aware of an enthusiasm which is lacking in many of the highly finished proofs which preceded it that Mr Kipling could write almost anything as well as almost anybody else. In *The Day's Work* he passes into a province which he was insistently urged to occupy by right of inspiration.

The Day's Work brings us directly into

touch with one of the most distinctive features of Mr Kipling's method. He has never been able to resist the lure of things technical. If he writes of a horse he must write as though he had bred and sold horses all his life. If he writes of a steam-engine he must write as though he had spent his life among pistons and cylinders. He writes of ships and the sea, of fox-hunting, of the punishing of Pathans, of drilling by companies and of agriculture; and he writes as one from whom no craft could hide its mysteries. This fascination of mere craft, this delight in the technicalities and dialect of the world's work, is not a mannerism. It is not a parade of omniscience or the madness of a note-book worm. It is fundamental in Mr Kipling. It is wrong to think of *Between the Devil and the Deep Sea* or of *'007* as the unfortunate rioting of an amateur machinist. To those who object that Mr Kipling has spoiled these stories with an absurd enthusiasm for bolts and bars it has at once to be answered that but for this

very enthusiasm for bolts and bars, which the undiscerning have found so tedious, the great majority of Mr Kipling's stories would never have been written at all. A powerful turbine excites in Mr Kipling precisely the same quality of emotion which a comely landscape excited in Wordsworth; and this emotion is stamped upon all that he has written in this kind. There is a passage in *Between the Devil and the Deep Sea* which runs:

"What follows is worth consideration. The forward engine had no more work to do. Its released piston-rod, therefore, drove up fiercely, with nothing to check it, and started most of the nuts of the cylinder-cover. It came down again, the full weight of the steam behind it, and the foot of the disconnected connecting-rod, useless as the leg of a man with a sprained ankle, flung out to the right and struck the starboard, or right-hand, cast-iron supporting-column of the forward engine, cracking it clean through about six inches above the base, and wedging the upper portion outwards three inches towards

the ship's side. There the connecting-rod jammed. Meantime, the after engine, being as yet unembarrassed, went on with its work, and in so doing brought round at its next revolution the crank of the forward engine, which smote the already jammed connecting-rod, bending it and therewith the piston-rod cross-head—the big cross-piece that slides up and down so smoothly."

This is the method of Homer as applied to the shield of Achilles, the method of Milton in enumerating the superior fiends, the method of Walter Scott confronted with a mountain pass, the method of the sonneteer to his mistress' eyebrow. Mr Kipling's enthusiasm for these broken engines would be intolerable if it were not obviously genuine. Unless we shut our ears and admit no songs that sing of things as yet unfamiliar to the poets of blue sky and violets dim as Cytherea's eyes, we cannot possibly mistake the lyrical ecstasy of the above passage. When Mr Kipling tells how a released piston-rod drove up fiercely and started the nuts

of the cylinder-cover, it is an incantation. His machines are more alive than his men and women. It is more important to know about the cast-iron supporting-column of Mr Kipling's forward engine than to know that Maisie had long hair and grey eyes, or to know what happened to any of the people whom it concerned. *·007*, which is the story of a shining and ambitious young locomotive, is ten times more vital—it calls for ten times more fellow-feeling—than the heart affairs of Private Learoyd or the distresses of the Copleigh girls at Simla. The pain that shoots through ·007 when he first becomes acquainted with a hot-box is a more human and recognisable bit of consciousness than anything to be shared with the Head of the District or the Man Who Was. The psychology of the Mill Wheel in *Below the Mill Dam* is quite obviously accurate. That Mill Wheel, unlike scores of Mr Kipling's men and women, is a creature we have met, who refuses to be forgotten. When he is dealing with men Mr Kipling celebrates not so much

mankind as the skill and competency of mankind as severely applied to a given and necessary task. It follows that Mr Kipling's men at their best are most excellent machines. It follows, again, that when Mr Kipling drops the pretence that he is deeply concerned with man as man, and begins to celebrate with all his might the machine as the machine, we realise that his machine is the better man of the two.

The inspiration which Mr Kipling first indulged to its full bent in *The Day's Work* lives on through all the ensuing books. It reaches a climax in *With the Night Mail*, a post-dated vision of the air. It is one of the most remarkable stories he has written—a story produced at full pressure of the imagination which, but for its fatal prophesying, would keep his memory green for generations. The detail with which the theme is worked out is extravagant; but it is the extravagance of an inspired lover. To quarrel with its technical exuberance on the ground that Mr Kipling should have made it

less like the vision of an engineer is simply to miss almost the main impulse of Mr Kipling's progress. It is true that unless we share Mr Kipling's enthusiasm for The Night Mail as a beautiful machine, for the men who governed it as skilled mechanicians, and for all the minutiæ of the control and distribution of traffic by air, we are not likely to be greatly held by the story. But this is simply to say that unless we catch the passion of an author we may as well shut the author's book.

This does not imply that we must love machinery in order to love Mr Kipling's enthusiasm for machinery. We have to share the author's passion; but not necessarily to dote upon its object. It is not essential to an admiration of Shakespeare's sonnets that the admirer should have been a suitor of the Dark Lady. It matters hardly at all what is the inspiration of an imaginative author. So long as he succeeds in getting into a highly fervent condition, which prompts him to write, with entire

forgetfulness of himself and the reader, of things whose beauty he was born to see, it is of little moment how he happens to be kindled. We do not need to be suffering the pangs of adolescent love, or even to know the story of Fanny Brawne, to hear the immortal longing of John Keats sounding between all the lines of the great Odes:

"Bold lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
Though winning near the goal—yet do not grieve;
She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
For ever wilt thou love and she be fair."

We do not need to be the enemy of the Arminians to resolve the music of Milton; and we may live all our lives in a city and yet know Wordsworth for a great poet. Shelley does not suffer because philosophic anarchy has gone out of fashion; and the poetry of the Hebrews lives for ever, though its readers have never lived in the shadow of Sinai. These mighty instances are here

intended not to establish a comparison but to establish a principle. The exact source of Mr Kipling's inspiration matters not a straw. We simply know that his machinery is alive and lovely in his eyes. He communicates his passion to his reader though his readers are unable to distinguish between a piston-rod and a cylinder-cover.

The Day's Work throws back a clear and searching light upon some of the tales, Indian and political, which we have already passed in review. As we look back upon these stories of men and women we realise, in the light of *The Day's Work*, that machinery —the machinery of Army and Empire— enters repeatedly as a leading motive. Far from regarding Mr Kipling's passion for technical engineering as something which gets in the way of his natural genius for telling human tales, we are brought finally to realise that many of these human tales are no more than an excuse for the indulging of a passion that helplessly spins them. As literature *William the Conqueror* and *The*

Head of the District have less to do with the politics of India than with the nuts and bolts of *The Ship That Found Herself.* The same truth applies equally to a book which has been discussed beyond all proportion to its rank among the stories of Mr Kipling. *The Light That Failed* is often read as the high and tragical love story of Dick Heldar; but it is really nothing of the kind. It really belongs to *The Day's Work.* As the love story of Dick Heldar it is of small account. Mr Kipling thinks very little of it from that point of view. He has even allowed it, upon that side, to be deprived of all its significance in order to meet the needs of a popular actor. Mr Kipling is not the man to sell his conscience. Therefore his admirers may infer from the fact that he has sold Dick and Maisie to British and American playgoers that Dick and Maisie are not regarded by their author as of the first importance. We cannot think of Mr Kipling as allowing one screw of the ship that found herself to be misplaced. But he

has cheerfully allowed his story of Dick and Maisie to be turned with a few strokes of the pen into an effective curtain for a negligible play.

This does not mean that *The Light That Failed* is not a characteristic and a fine achievement. It means that its character and fineness have nothing to do with Dick and Maisie or with any of that stuff of the story which contrives to exist behind the footlights of Sir Johnston Forbes Robertson's theatre. *The Light That Failed* must not be read as the love story of a painter who goes blind. It must be read, with *·007* and *The Maltese Cat*, as an enthusiastic account of the day's work of a newspaper correspondent. The really vital passages of the story have all to do with Mr Kipling's chosen text of work for work's sake. Dick's work and not Dick himself is the hero of the play. The only incident which really affects us is the scraping out of his last picture. We do not bother in the least as to whether Maisie returns to him or stays away; because we

do not believe in the reality of Maisie and we cannot imagine anything she may or may not do as affecting anyone very seriously. Dick's wrestle with his picture is another matter. He and his friends may talk a great deal of nonsense about their work (nonsense which would strictly require us to condemn every good page which Mr Kipling has written), but there is no doubt whatever that the enthusiasm of men for men's work is the vital and moving principle of *The Light That Failed*. The motive of the whole story is the motive of *The Bridge-Builders*. The rest is merely accessory.

The Light That Failed is full of instruction for the close critic of Mr Kipling. We discover in it three out of the many levels of excellence in which he moves. First there is a cunning artificer pretending to a knowledge and admiration which he does not really possess—an artificer who tries to impose Maisie and the Red-Haired Girl upon us in the same deceiving way as the way in which he tried to impose upon us Mrs

Hawksbee and the Copleigh girls. Second, there is a clever writer of soldier stories, showing us some nasty fighting at close range, with a far too elaborate pretence that he can take it all for granted as a professional combatant. Finally there is an inspired author celebrating the world's work—an author we have agreed to put in a higher rank than those other literary experts who have quite unjustifiably stolen his greener laurels.

VII

THE FINER GRAIN

IT has been Mr Kipling's habit all through his career to peg out literary claims for himself as evidence of his intention later on to work them at a profit. Thus, writing *Plain Tales from the Hills*, he includes one or two stories, such as *The Taking of Lungtungpen* and *The Three Musketeers*, which clearly look forward to *Soldiers Three* and all the later stories in that kind. Or, again, he looks forward in *Tods' Amendment* and *Wee Willie Winkie* to the time when he will write many stories, and, in a sense, whole books concerning children. *Tods' Amendment* promises *Baa Baa Black Sheep*, and *Just So Stories*; it even promises *Stalky & Co.*, which is simply the best collection of boisterous boy farces ever written. Then, again, there is *In the*

Rukh, out of *Many Inventions*, which looks forward to the *Jungle Book*. Finally, there is, in *The Day's Work*, clear evidence of Mr Kipling's intention ultimately to abandon the hills and plains of India and to take literary seisin of the country and chronicles of England.

The first undoubted evidence that Mr Kipling, who started with skilful tales of India, was bound in the end to turn homewards for a deeper inspiration is contained in a story from *The Day's Work*. *My Sunday at Home* is ostensibly broad farce, of the *Bruggles*mith variety—farce which might well call for a chapter to itself were it not that broad farce is much the same whoever the writer may be. But *My Sunday at Home* is really less important as farce than as evidence of Mr Kipling's enthusiasm for the stillness and ancientry of the English wayside. The pages of this story distil and drip with peace. Moreover, the story is neighboured with two others, all beckoning Mr Kipling home to Burwash in Sussex.

There is the Brushwood Boy, who after work comes home and finds it good—good after his work is done. There is also *An Error in the Fourth Dimension* wherein Mr Kipling is found playing affectionately with the idea that England is quite unlike any other country. There is in England a fourth dimension which is beyond the perception, say, of an American railway king, who after much amazement and wrath concludes that the English are not a modern people and thereafter returns to his own more reasonable land.

Of the miscellaneous stories in which Mr Kipling surrenders utterly to this later theme perhaps the most memorable is *An Habitation Enforced* from *Actions and Reactions.* Here we are in quite another plane of authorship from that in which we have moved in the tales of India. There is a wide difference between *The Return of Imray*—to take one of the most skilful tales of India—and *An Habitation Enforced. The Return of Imray* betrays the conscious resolution of a clever

man of letters to make the most effective use of good material. But *An Habitation Enforced* is the spontaneous gesture of pure feeling. The Indian stories are ingenious and well managed. Their point is made. Their workmanship is excellent. Atmospheres and impressions are cunningly arranged. But they very rarely succeed in carrying the reader as the reader is carried upon this later tide.

The feeling of *An Habitation Enforced*, as of all the English tales, is that of the traveller returned. The value of Mr Kipling's traffics and discoveries over the seven seas is less in the record he has made of these adventures than in their having enabled him to return to England with eyes sharpened by exile, with his senses alert for that fourth dimension which does not exist for the stranger. *An Habitation Enforced* is inspired by the nostalgia of inveterate banishment. Some part of its perfection—it is one of the few perfect short stories in the English tongue—is due to the perfect agree-

ment of its form with the passion that informs its writing. It is the story of a homing Englishwoman, and of her restoration to the absolute earth of her forbears. In writing of this woman Mr Kipling has only had to recall his own joyful adventure in picking up the threads of a life at once familiar and mysterious, in meeting again the homely miracle of things that never change. Finally England claims her utterly—her and her children and her American husband. It was an American who bade Cloke, man of the soil and acquired retainer of the family, bring down larch-poles for a light bridge over the brook; but it was an Englishman reclaimed who needs consented to Cloke's amendment:

"'But where the deuce are the larch-poles, Cloke? I told you to have them down here ready.'

"'We'll get 'em down *if* you say so,' Cloke answered, with a thrust of the underlip they both knew.

"'But I did say so. What on earth have

you brought that timber-tug here for? We aren't building a railway bridge. Why, in America, half-a-dozen two-by-four bits would be ample.'

"'I don't know nothin' about that,' said Cloke. 'An' I've nothin' to say against larch—*if* you want to make a temp'ry job of it. I ain't 'ere to tell you what isn't so, sir; an' you can't say I ever come creepin' up on you, or tryin' to lead you farther in than you set out——'

"A year ago George would have danced with impatience. Now he scraped a little mud off his old gaiters with his spud, and waited.

"'All I say is that you can put up larch and make a temp'ry job of it; and by the time the young master's married it'll have to be done again. Now, I've brought down a couple of as sweet six-by-eight oak timbers as we've ever drawed. You put 'em in an' it's off your mind for good an' all. T'other way—I don't say it ain't right, I'm only just sayin' what I think—but t'other way, he'll no sooner be married than we'll 'ave it *all* to do again. You've no call to regard my words, but you can't get out of *that*.'

"'No,' said George, after a pause; 'I've

been realising that for some time. Make it oak then; we can't get out of it.' "

This story is the real beginning of Puck —to whom Mr Kipling's latest volumes are addressed. In *Puck of Pook's Hill* Mr Kipling takes seisin of England in all times —more particularly of that trodden nook of England about Pevensey. This book is less a book of children and fairies than an English chronicle. Dan and Una are the least living of Mr Kipling's children—they are as shadowy as the little ghost who dropped a kiss upon the palm of the visitor in the mansion of *They*. The men, too, who come and go, are shadows. It is the land which abides and is real. We hum continually a variation of Shakespeare's song:

" This blessèd plot, this earth, this realm,
this England."

Puck of Pook's Hill is a final answer to those who think of the Imperial idea as loose and

vast, without roots in any dear, particular soil. *Puck of Pook's Hill* suggests in every page that England could never for its lovers be too small. We would know intimately each place where the Roman trod, where Weland came and went, where Saxon and Norman lost themselves in a common league.

From this England, fluttered with memories and the most ancient magic, it is a natural step into the regions of pure fancy where Mr Kipling is happiest of all. *The Children of the Zodiac* and *The Brushwood Boy* are the earliest proofs that Mr Kipling flies most surely when he is least impeded by a human or material document. We have here to make a last protest against a too popular fallacy concerning the tales of Mr Kipling. Mr Kipling's passion for the concrete, which is a passion of all truly imaginative men, together with his keen delight in the work of the world, has caused him to be falsely regarded as a note-book realist of the modern type. He is assumed to be happiest when writing from direct experience

without refinement or transmutation. We cannot trace this error to its source and expose the many fallacies it contains without going deeper into æsthetics than is here necessary or desirable. The simple fact that Mr Kipling's best stories are those in which his fancy is most free is answer enough to those who put him among the reporters of things as they are. It sufficiently excuses us from the long and difficult inquiry as to whether Mr Kipling's account of the people who live next door is accurate and minute, and allows us to assume, without starting a controversy which only a heavy volume could determine, that, if Mr Kipling had ever set out to describe the people who live next door, he would have simplified them out of all recognition. Mr Kipling has pretended, often with some success, that his people are really to be met with in the Royal Navy or in the Indian Civil Service. But let the reader consider for a moment whom they remember best. Is it Mowgli or is it someone who is a C.I.E. ? Is it the Elephant

Child, or is it Mr Grish Chunder Dé ? When does Mr Kipling more successfully convey to us the impression that his people are alive and real ? Is it when he is supposed to be drawing men from the life, or is it when he has set free his imagination to call up the People of the Hills or the folk in the Jungle ?

The grain of Mr Kipling's work is the finer, his vision is more confident and clear, the further he gets from the world immediately about him. Already we have seen how happily in India he left behind his impression of the alert tourist, his experience of the mess-room and bazaar, to enshrine in his fairy tale of *Kim* the faith and simplicity of two of the children of the world—each, the old and the young, a child after his own fashion. *Kim* is Mr Kipling's escape from the India which is traversed by the railway and served by the " Pioneer." It is the escape of Dan and Una into the Kingdom of Puck, and the escape of Mowgli into the Jungle. It is the escape, finally, of Mr Kipling's

genius into the region where it most freely breathes.

We have noted that *Kim* is one of the Indian doors by which we enter; but there is a more open door in the first story of *The Second Jungle Book*. It is the best of all Mr Kipling's stories, just as the *Jungle Books* are the best of all his books. It concerns the Indian, Purun Bhagat.

He was learned, supple, and deeply intimate in the affairs of the world. He had shared the counsels of princes; he had been received with honour in the clubs and societies of Europe. He was, to all appearances, a polite blend of all the talents of East and West. Then suddenly Purun Bhagat disappeared. All India understood; but of all Western people only Mr Kipling was able to follow where he walked as a holy man and a beggar into the hills. There he became St Francis of the Hills, living in a little shrine with the friendly creatures of the woods, venerated and cared for by a village on the hillside.

All Mr Kipling's readers know how that story ends—how on a night of disaster there came together as of one blood the saint and his people and the wild creatures who had housed with him. It is quoted here as showing how the old piety of India beckoned Mr Kipling into the jungle as inevitably as the old loyalty of England beckoned him into a region where on a summer day we can meet without surprise a Flint Man or a Centurion of Rome.

Always the bent of Mr Kipling, in his best work, is found to be away from the world. To appreciate his finer quality we must pass with him into the Rukh, or into the country beyond Policeman Day, into the mansion of lost children, or into a region where it is but a step from the Zodiac to fields under the plough. The tales of Mr Kipling which will longest survive him are not the tales where he is competently brutal and omniscient, but the tales where he instinctively flies from the necessity of giving to his vision the likeness of the modern world.

We may now realise more clearly the peril which lies in the popular fallacy concerning Mr Kipling described in the first few pages of this book. So far is Mr Kipling from being an author inspired and driven to claim a share in the active life of the present, an author who unloads upon us a store of memories and experience, that he is only able to do his finest work as an unchecked and fantastic dreamer. The stories in which he imposes upon his readers the illusion that he would never have written books if he had stayed at home, that his stories are the carelessly flung reminiscences of a full life—these stories are themselves instances of the skill whereby a cunning author has been able to conceal from his generation the deep difference between artifice and inspiration. A crafty author will often employ his best phrases to describe the thing he has never really seen with the eye of genius. His manner will be most assured where his matter is the least authentic. His points will be most effectively made where there is the

least necessity to make them. Mr Kipling, writing as a soldier, is more a soldier than any soldier who ever lived. Thereby the discerning reader will infer that Mr Kipling was not born to write as a soldier. He will know that Mr Kipling is not profoundly and instinctively an atavistic prophet, because his atavism is more atavistic than the atavism of the first man who ever was born. He will also realise that Mr Kipling writes so effectively about India because he ought to be writing about England and Fairyland and the Jungle. He will realise, in short, that Mr Kipling is an imaginative man of letters who has wonderful visions when he stays at home, and who needs all his craft as an expert literary artificer to persuade his readers that these visions are not seriously impaired when he ventures abroad.

VIII

THE POEMS

ONLY the briefest epilogue is necessary concerning Mr Kipling's poetry. We have concluded as to his prose stories that his best work is in the pure fancy of *The Jungle Book*, and that we descend thence through his English tales and his celebration of the work of the world to clever stories of India and *Soldiers Three*. Upon each of these levels we meet with verse in the same kind, concerning which it may at once be said that at all times, except where the rule is proved by the exception, Mr Kipling's verse is less urgently inspired than his prose. The true motive which drives a poet into verse is the perception of a quality in the thing he has to say which requires for its delivery the beat and lift of a rhythm which crosses and penetrates the

rhythm of sense and logic. This is true even of the poetry which seems, at first, to contradict it. Pope's *Essay on Man*, for example, which at first seems no more than a neater prose than the prose of Addison, is really not prose at all. In addition to the cool sense of what appears to be no more than a pentametric arrangement of commonplaces there is a rhythm which admirably conveys, independently of what is being actually said, the gentle perambulating of the eighteenth-century philosopher in the garden which Candide retired to cultivate in the best of all possible worlds. In all poetry there must be a manifest reason why prose would not have served the author's purpose equally well.

Can we say this of Mr Kipling's poetry? Is Mr Kipling's poetry the result of an urgent need for a metrical utterance?

A careful reading of Mr Kipling's verse, comparing it subject for subject with his prose, soon convinces us that, far from being a more direct passionate and living utter-

ance than his prose, it is invariably more wrought and careful and elaborate. It does not suggest the poet driven into song. It suggests rather the skilful writer borrowing the manner of a poet, playing, as it were, with the poet's tools, without any urgent impulse to express himself in that particular way. He has merely added to the number of rules to be successfully observed. Of his technical success there is seldom any doubt at all. For a craftsman who can use all the intricate resources of good prose successfully to create an illusion that he is inspired in his least abandoned moments, it is child's play to use the more obvious devices of the metrician to similar effect. So far as mere formal excellence is concerned, verse is a journeyman's matter as compared with prose; and it is not at all astonishing to find that the formal part of poetry troubles Mr Kipling not at all. But we must look beyond the formality of verse to find a poet. Poetry flies higher than prose only when the poet's feeling has

driven him to sing what he cannot say. Mr Kipling is a wonderful metrician; but that is not the question. The question is, Where shall we find the most immediate union of the author's feeling with the author's expression? And the answer to that will be, Not in the author's poems.

Take as an example the English motive:

"See you our little mill that clacks,
So busy by the brook?
She has ground her corn and paid her tax
Ever since Domesday Book."

Compare this well-wrought stanza with the prose tale *Below the Mill Dam*, or with the passage it paraphrases in the story to which it stands as motto:

"The English are a bold people. His Saxons would laugh and jest with Hugh, and Hugh with them, and—this was marvellous to me—if even the meanest of them said such and such a thing was the Custom of the Manor, then straightway would Hugh and such old men of the Manor as might be

near forsake everything else to debate the matter—I have seen them stop the mill with the corn half ground—and if the custom or usage were proven to be as it was said, why, that was the end of it, even though it were flat against Hugh, his wish and command."

It may be said of the verse that, possibly, it is more carefully considered than the prose, more deliberate and formally more excellent. But it is certainly more remote from the passion it conveys. There is more drive in a single fragment of *An Habitation Enforced* than in all the songs of Puck.

Similarly let us take another of Mr Kipling's themes—his delight in the world's work. Think first of *The Bridge-Builders* and of *William the Conqueror* and then turn to *The Bell Buoy* (*Five Nations*) or *The White Man's Burden* (*Five Nations*). In each case—and we repeat the result every time the experiment is made—we find that the author's motive, which lives in his prose, tends in his verse to expire. In

The White Man's Burden it expires outright, so that reading it, it is difficult to realise that *William the Conqueror* has had the power so deeply to move us.

This is true even where Mr Kipling's subject, which in prose has not taken him to the top of his achievement, has in verse taken him as high as in verse he is able to go. Mr Kipling's best verse is contained in *Barrack Room Ballads*; but even these do not compare in merit with *Soldiers Three*. *Barrack Room Ballads* are the best of Mr Kipling's poetry, because in these poems rhyme and beat are essential to their inspiration. They are the exception which prove the rule that normally Mr Kipling has no right to his metre. *Barrack Room Ballads* are robust and vivid songs of the camp, choruses which require no music to enable them to serve the purpose of any gathering where the first idea is that there should be a cheerful noise. Complete success in this kind only required Mr Kipling to fill in the skeleton of a metre which brings

the right words at the right moment to the tip of the galloping tongue, and this he has admirably done.

Where in *Barrack Room Ballads* Mr Kipling has attempted to do more than fill up the feet of an irresponsible line, his verse only succeeds in defining the weakness, in a corresponding kind, of his prose. We have seen that one weakness of his soldier tales is their over emphasis of the brutal aspect of war, natural in an author of sensitive imagination attempting to identify himself with the soldier's point of view. In the prose tales this exaggeration is only occasional. In *Barrack Room Ballads* it is more pronounced.

We may take three stanzas of *Snarleyow* as evidence that Mr Kipling's *Barrack Room Ballads*, unlike the songs of Puck and the greater mass of his verse, *really had to be metrical*; also as evidence that, in so far as they attempt to be more than a galloping chorus in dialect they are less admirable than the adventures of Ortheris and

Mulvaney. The Battery was charging into action and the Driver had just been saying that a Battery was hard to pull up when it was taking the field:

"'E 'adn't 'ardly spoke the word, before a
droppin' shell
A little right the batt'ry an' between the
sections fell;
An' when the smoke 'ad c'eared away,
before the limber wheels,
There lay the Driver's Brother with 'is
'ead between 'is 'eels.

"Then sez the Driver's Brother, an' 'is
words was very plain,
'For Gawd's own sake get over me, an'
put me out o' pain.'
They saw 'is wounds was mortial, an' they
judged that it was best,
So they took an' drove the limber straight
across 'is back an' chest.

"The Driver 'e give nothin' 'cept a little
coughin' grunt,
But 'e swung 'is 'orses 'andsome when it
came to 'Action Front!'

An' if one wheel was juicy, you may lay
your Monday head
'Twas juicier for the niggers when the case
began to spread."

The brutality in this incident is forced in idea and expression beyond anything we find in *Soldiers Three.* It is this continuous *forcing* of idea and expression which persists in virtually all Mr Kipling's verse except where the jingle is all that matters. We have only to recall recitations from the platform or before the curtain of some of Mr Kipling's popular poetry to realise, sometimes a little painfully, that verse is for him not a threshold of the authentic Hall of Song, but, too often, a door out of reality into the sentimental and overwrought.

Comparing the soldier tales and the soldier songs it is often possible, however, to miss the author's flagging, because, as we have seen, the soldier songs are the best songs, whereas the soldier tales are not the best tales. The full extent of the inferiority of Mr Kipling's verse to Mr Kipling's prose

cannot, however, be missed if we compare the finer grain of Mr Kipling's prose with the poems that deal with similar themes. Read first *The Story of Ung* (*The Seven Seas*) and afterwards the tale of the Flint Man found upon the Downs by Dan and Una (*Rewards and Fairies*). Or, to take an even more telling instance, recall the most perfect of all Mr Kipling's tales *The Miracle of Purun Bhagat*, and afterwards read the poem that is proudly set at the head of it :

" The night we felt the earth would move
We stole and plucked him by the hand,
Because we loved him with the love
That knows but cannot understand.

" And when the roaring hillside broke,
And all our world fell down in rain,
We saved him, we the Little Folk;
But lo! he does not come again!

" Mourn now, we saved him for the sake
Of such poor love as wild ones may.
Mourn ye! Our brother will not wake,
And his own kind drive us away!"

Dirge of the Langurs.

The poem is excellent cold craft, but leaves us precisely in the state of mind in which it found us. The story which follows it is rooted in the same idea; but, where the one is a literary exercise, the other is a supreme feat of imagination.

Here, with *The Miracle of Purun Bhagat*, the story itself and not the dirge of the Langurs, we may conveniently leave the reputation of our author. Critics of a future generation may need to apologise for including within the limits of a brief monograph a specific chapter upon Mr Kipling's verse. They will not need to apologise for its brevity.

IX

A POSTSCRIPT NOTE ON THE WAR BOOKS

A FEW words are necessary regarding the books which Mr Kipling has written during the war. If the view of Mr Kipling were right which celebrates him as an author born to be mainly distinguished from his contemporaries by a natural violence and brutality—if, as has frequently been the charge, Mr Kipling is the Bismarck of our letters, a writer of blood and iron, the laureate of a bloodshot Imperialism—why, then, we should expect the war to be the inevitable crowning theme of his literary career. We should expect his inspiration to soar to heights which before were unattainable. What is it that we actually observe? Apart from *A Diversity of Creatures*, which belongs in no sense to the war and calls for no comment apart from the general criticism accorded to his other stories, Mr Kipling has published since

August, 1914: *The New Army in Training*, *Sea Warfare* (which includes the *Fringes of the Fleet*, *Destroyers at Jutland* and *Tales of the Trade*), *France at War* and the Italian sketches printed in *The Times*. The significant thing about these books is that they are war books only in the sense that they tell us about the work of the war. They really come under the description which stands at the head of a former chapter, *The Day's Work*. Their inspiration is the pride of a man in men's efficiency. They show us the familiar engineers, sailors and soldiers of Mr Kipling's earlier tales pitting all their resources of character and skill against a definite task to be accomplished. Take what is perhaps the best of them, those *Tales of the Trade* in which Mr Kipling, with the help of the British Admiralty, takes us with our English E-boats into the Baltic and the Sea of Marmora. We are asked to consider, not so much the war, as the day's work of the warrior. We are in the company of heroes, but we are asked to accept their heroism, as the heroes themselves accept it, as part of their day's work. We celebrate continually the job which cannot be too well done. The war itself appears as a kind of

transcendental job—only differing from the jobs which intrigued Mr Hinchcliffe in its complication and size and the amount of virtue it asks of the workman.

The result, as we should expect, is that Mr Kipling in these books of his about the war reaches all but his highest level, but not the level of the work we have included among the finer grain. We have seen that Mr Kipling's celebration of the world's work evokes in him an exalted enthusiasm and that his craft as a writer enables him to share this enthusiasm with his readers. No living author is better qualified than Mr Kipling to give the world a glimpse of our soldiers and sailors as they go about their business. But let us be clear as to why Mr Kipling writes of them so vividly and unforgettably. They live for us, not primarily as sailors and soldiers, but as men with a task. It is a mistake to rank them with the *Soldiers Three*. We must rank them, if we are to comprehend the life that inspires them, with *The Bridge-Builders*, *·007* and *The Ship that Found Herself*.

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